

Cynthia F. Reaves for the Rehabilitation of the Michelson-Young House, 918 West Boston Boulevard, Detroit

A string of visionaries have owned 918 West Boston Boulevard, from lumberman Nels Michelson who built the house and carriage house in 1917 to present owner, attorney Cynthia Reaves. Michelson worked his way from lumberjack to owner of prime Michigan timberland, and his ties to the lumber industry are reflected in the house's elaborate wood detailing. The second owner, Leonard A. Young, made a fortune during the earliest years of the auto industry. It was Young who in 1926 built the Athletic Building, complete with an Olympic-sized swimming pool and two bowling alleys. The house is commonly called the "Motown Mansion" after Motown Record Company founder Berry Gordy Jr. who purchased the house in 1967. Gordy lived there until he moved his music empire to Los Angeles in 1969. He continued to own the house until he sold it to Cynthia Reaves in 2001.

When Cynthia Reaves moved back to Detroit from Washington, D.C., she contacted Gordy and offered to buy 918 West Boston, which is located across the street from her childhood home. She knew what it would mean for the neighborhood, the Boston-Edison Historic District, to have the house returned to its original magnificence and occupied once again. Gordy agreed to sell her the house. Using the State Historic Preservation Tax Credits, Reaves spent four years rehabilitating the house. She and family members stripped and restored the variety of wood surfaces and restored the decorative painting and plaster. She updated the mechanicals and restored the landscape – and she rehabilitated the Carriage House and most of the Athletic Building.

Cynthia Reaves hosts charitable and political campaign events in the house, which serves as a venue for the discussion of issues of importance to the city and state. The meticulous rehabilitation has been a gift to the Boston-Edison Historic District, the city of Detroit, and the state of Michigan. More financially monumental than most residential state tax credit projects, this project represents the efforts of homeowners throughout Michigan to preserve their homes and their neighborhoods.

